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ABSTRACT

The English education program at the University of Maryland, College Park, serves as a sound model for teacher preparation. The requirements of the program accommodate the changing needs of society while preserving the traditions of literature and language study. All education students must fulfill university-wide requirements and meet general certification standards by enrollment in courses in human growth and development, general secondary methodology, and educational history and philosophy. The special requirements of the English education program are as follows: (1) 6 hours of course work in speech, (2) 21 hours in a range of literary offerings, (3) 6 hours of linguistics or grammar, (4) 6 hours of writing instruction, (5) 9 hours of elective English courses; and (6) 26 hours of teaching methods (including student teaching). The students must also demonstrate competency in a foreign language at an intermediate level. Students in the junior year function as aides to English teachers for one half day per week for a full semester. In addition, student teaching is done for a full 15-week period. By the time the English education program is completed, students have obtained a strong academic background in English, developed an array of conceptions and techniques for teaching English, and experienced the spectrum of teaching situations. (SRT)

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PREPARING TEACHERS OF ENGLISH IN AN INCREASINGLY COMPLEX SOCIETY: ONE MODEL

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Teachers of English in American public schools are faced with increasing demands for professional expertise. Although English as a discipline of study, particularly at secondary level, is already overburdened with content, expectations continue to rise about what English teachers should accomplish with their students. Whether it is explication of text, instruction in the recursive process of composition, skill in language remediation, or whether it is an assortment of other concerns from spelling to media,

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English teachers are expected to do it. And; to pun in the fashion of current American bumpersticker mottoes, do it with class.

In addition to pressures which stem from efforts to reform education, three other pressures affect the teaching of English at this time. They are: the increasingly pluralistic nature of American society, the increasingly turbulent nature of adolescence, and the increasingly strong application of business management techniques to teacher performance. As these pressures make themselves felt in the English classroom, teachers find themselves underprepared and overworked. Disenchanted and defeated, many of them leave the profession. Others remain, struggling with a Hurculean task.

Clearly, there is a need for stronger preparation of teachers of English, both academically and pedagogically. The problem is knowing what to require and how to provide it. The faculty of the English Education program of the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) has fashioned an intensive set of requirements that seeks to accommodate the changing needs of an increasingly complex society at the same time it seeks to preserve the traditions of literature and language study central to the discipline of English. As part of a large department which educates early-childhood, elementary, and secondary undergraduates, the English Education program is accountable to accreditation standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National

Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC). In addition, the English Education program meets the Guidelines of the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts of the National Council of Teachers of English. Widely applauded as a leader in the preparation of teachers of English, the UMCP program may be studied profitably as one model for helping beginning teachers achieve expertise under pressured circumstances.

UMCP operates on the semester system, in which three academic credits are earned for 45 class contact hours. All undergraduate students must fulfill requirements in the University Studies Program (USP). Developed with the intention of ensuring that students have broad contact with scholarship, the three categories of the USP are ideally suited to assist in the profile of English teachers. The categories are: Fundamental Studies (English and Mathematics); Distributive Studies (Culture, History, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Literature, Arts, Social and Behavioral Sciences); and Advanced Studies (Development of Knowledge, Analysis of Human Problems).

In addition to these University-wide requirements, students in the English Education program are required to meet general certification standards by enrollment in courses in human growth and development, general secondary methodology, and educational history and philosophy.

The special requirements of the English Education program are derived from a list of competencies developed by the English Education faculty from knowledge of the field as well as from advice of a wide assortment of practitioners. The competencies are viewed as ensuring a high degree of entry level skills for teachers grades 5-12. From three strands of experiences, students are led to engage in practice that responds to diverse student constituencies, to the changing nature of American youth, and to the requirements of professional accountability. The three strands are 1) study of the discipline of English; 2) study of pedagogy that is English specific; and 3) field experience which exposes students over extended time to the realities of public school teaching.

Study of the Discipline of English

The study of English in American secondary education has long been a grab bag--filled with everything from vocabulary development to speech making, from etiquette to essay writing, from penmanship to Shakespeare. To teach well within the field requires breadth of knowledge; the ability to share knowledge and feeling while fostering the components of reading, writing, speaking, and listening; and the ability to motivate and challenge thought and expression regardless of students' grade levels and intellectual capacities.

The UMCP program hopes to prepare prospective teachers to teach well by seeing to it that they are grounded in academic study that requires mastery of the components of the discipline. In addition to requirements of 42 credits in English, students

complete six hours of course work in Speech, and demonstrate competency at intermediate level in a foreign language.

Adhering to the time-honored conception of the discipline as literature centered, the English Education program requires study of 21 hours in a range of literary offerings: Shakespeare, world literature, American literature, English literature, genre, literary history, and critical methods of literature. Because the program allows nine credits of electives, most students choose additional literature courses to enrich their programs. (The English Department of UMCP has the established practice of integrating multi-cultural and minority literatures within survey courses. In addition, there are numerous offerings which focus on those literatures specifically.)

Six credits are required in language study. All students take Introduction to Linguistics and another course chosen from the range of linguistics and grammar. Graduation requirements in the program also cause students to pass successfully an English grammar and usage examination administered by the University's Learning Assistance Service.

Writing course requirements total six credits, three of which are in Advanced Expository Writing.

Experience demonstrates that in addition to other benefits that accrue from the study of foreign language and of Speech that students make important transfers of knowledge about language structure and conventions and about the significance of oral communication skills.

Study of English Specific Pedagogy

Recognizing the need for helping students integrate their knowledge of English with the necessities of teaching it to adolescents, the English Education program requires that students show proficiency in 26 credits of work that are specific to teaching the discipline. Building on the 12 credits of general professional education discussed earlier, the English specific courses confront prospective teachers with opportunities to relate the content of their concentration to the possible ways of sharing it with future students. Requirements in this area are courses entitled Literature for Adolescents, The Teaching of Reading, The Teaching of Writing, Methods of Teaching English, and Student Teaching.

Field Experience

Responding to the commonly held belief that early field experiences provide students with more insightful ways of developing teaching expertise, the English Education program allows for that activity before the professional component is begun in junior year, but requires at junior year that students participate in field observation/activity as part of the human growth and development course. Other field experiences are gained as part of the Methods of Teaching English course when students function as aides to English teachers one half day per week throughout the semester. Student teaching, the final professional education component places students in public school settings for a full 15 week period where they work on the same calendar and hour schedule as their cooperating teachers. During that time, students

return to campus four afternoons for seminars that focus on common concerns of content and methodology.

Except in unusual circumstances, English Education students have their field experiences in UMCP's Teacher Education Centers which exist in many of the State's counties. Collaborative in nature, Teacher Education Centers provide preservice experiences for University students and inservice experiences (workshops and courses) for Center faculty and administration. Placement in the Centers allows for experiences of a wider nature than possible in solitary school settings. Students, working under the direction of a Center Coordinator jointly employed by the University and a local school district, have varied observations in many classrooms and the opportunity to student teach in different settings as well. In many instances, students work with teacher teams. The Coordinator maintains a developmental/remedial seminar series with the students. Because of the conception of the Teacher Education Center, Coordinators, in conjunction with cooperating teachers, provide unusual personal attention to students. Placement in all field experiences is accomplished after conferences between and among English Education faculty, College placement staff, Teacher Education Center Coordinators, and public school faculty. Students not only complete extensive information forms that help guide placements, they participate in an orientation assembly in the semester prior to student teaching.

The open-door policy of the English Education faculty

facilitates a close relationship between students and faculty; because of their working knowledge of students--their interests and skills--faculty are well able to advise them in the study of the discipline of English, in the study of English apecific pedagogy, and in field experience placements.

Most of the Teacher Edeucation Centers at UMCP are located in reasonable proximity to Washington, D.C. Those locations extend over a range of communities--suburban, rural, small city--and over socio-economic spans from below-poverty-level to upper middle class and from relatively fixed racial and ethnic backgrounds to those of widely diverse mixtures.

By the time students complete the English Education degree requirements, they have the opportunity to obtain strong academic backgrounds in English, to develop an array of conceptions and techniques for teaching English, and to experience the spectrum of teaching situations.

The requirements of accreditation and the teacher preparation guidelines of NCTE urge a process of continuing review. Happily, the faculty of the UMCP English Education program over the last 25 years have been marked by their committment to review and revision.

No program for preparing teachers of English in the United States in the latter part of this century can be perfect. Those at UMCP are keenly aware of that reality. The pressures within and without education are demanding greater expertise as each

year passes. Predicting what will be needed and what will succeed in the next century is chancey at best. Today's complexity may be the source of tomorrow's nostalgia for simpler times.

Through continuous and careful self-study--attending equally to the three strands of English teacher preparation--it is possible to stay abreast of the demands placed on those who teach in what will surely continue to be an increasingly complex society.